

## APPENDIX D

**AIR ASSAULT DIVISION**

The air assault division combines strategic mobility with an extremely high degree of tactical mobility within its AO. The division conducts air assault operations by combining Army aviation and infantry units with other members of the combined arms team; these elements form powerful, and flexible air assault TFs that can project combat power throughout the entire depth, width, and breadth of the modern battlefield with little regard for terrain barriers. The air assault division can be employed in peace, conflict, or war.

The air assault division can be employed as part of an independent corps or a JTF. The division operates from a position on the battlefield that allows its mobility to be used to its advantage throughout the assigned AO. It is employed under conditions that provide it with a calculated advantage due to surprise, terrain, threat, or mobility.

Airmobile divisions provide the US Army with the operational foundation, experience, and tactics for air assault operations; however, the air assault division no longer merely conducts airmobile operations. It is important to recognize the distinction between airmobile and air assault.

Airmobility is the use of Army aircraft whenever and however they improve the ability to fight. Essentially, it involves movement of troops and equipment from one secure area to another; the helicopters depart the AO after insertion.

Air assault operations involve combat, CS, and CSS elements (aircraft and troops) deliberately task organized for tactical operations. Aviation is the prime mover, and aircraft are integrated with ground forces. Air assault operations generally involve insertions and extractions under hostile conditions, rather than air movement of troops to and from secure locations about the battlefield in airmobile operations.

Once deployed on the ground, air assault infantry battalions fight like those of the infantry division; however, normal task organization of organic aviation assets permits rapid aerial deployment. The essence of air assault tactics is rapid tempo of operations over extended ranges. Execution of successive air assault operations enables the division commander to seize and maintain the tactical initiative.

**DEPLOYMENT**

The air assault division deploys much like an LID. The lack of heavy equipment permits the division to assemble rapidly and deploy by air on short notice. The division's aviation assets may self-deploy or be transported to the AO via USAF aircraft.

The air assault division deploys into contingency scenarios usually by moving to its ISB or lodgement area near the AOs via USAF aircraft. The division rapidly establishes support facilities primarily for the aviation assets and then launches into the AO.

**BATTLEFIELD OPERATING SYSTEMS**

As with other combat units, employment of the air assault division is a function of the applicable BOS. The following discussion focuses on the BOS used by the division while planning tactical operations.

**Intelligence.** These considerations apply:

- The primary enemy tactics against air assault operations can be broken down into four major areas:
  - Air defense fires (including small arms).
  - Fixed and rotary-wing aircraft.
  - EW.
  - Enemy reaction to LZ operations.
- The capabilities and limitations of enemy aircraft within the AO must be understood, and all measures to minimize the risk of encounter must be taken.

Enemy EW capabilities that would influence the air assault operations (to include jamming, direction-finding and monitoring of communications, or jamming and direction-finding involving friendly radars) must be determined and appropriate electronic countermeasures employed.

- Analysis of enemy capabilities to interdict friendly LZs with ground forces, artillery, and CAS must be accomplished during the planning phase of the operation.
- The IPB process is especially important to the air assault division because of the division's capability for extended distances and 360-degree orientation.

**Maneuver.** These considerations apply:

- Habitual relationships and the integration of infantry and Army aviation allow infantrymen and supporting fires to strike rapidly over extended distances.
- The organic aviation assets of the division can normally insert, at one time, an infantry brigade (-) or two battalion TFs (+).
- The required combat power should be delivered to the objective area as early as possible, consistent with aircraft and pickup zone (PZ) capabilities, to provide surprise and shock effect.
- Attack helicopter battalions are used primarily in an antiarmor role and are integrated into the tactical plan of the ground force commander.
- Air assault forces operate relatively free of the terrain influences that restrict surface operations.
- The force must be tailored to provide en route security and protection at the PZ, throughout the entire flight route, and at the LZ.
- Air assault forces are best employed to locate and defeat enemy forces and installations or to seize terrain objectives, thereby preventing enemy withdrawal, reinforcement, and supply and the shifting and reinforcement of enemy reserves.

**Fire Support.** These considerations apply:

- The FS planning must provide for suppressive fires along flight routes and in the vicinity of LZs. Priority of fires must be the suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD).
- The division is supported by an artillery battalion consisting of 105-mm towed howitzers.

- Displacement of FS assets and resupply is dependent on helicopters for prime movers, unless prime movers are lifted into the area.
- Suppression of suspected ADA sites along flight routes is vital to the success of an air assault operation.
- NGF support and USAF CAS may be available to augment the division's organic FA assets especially during CONOPS in which there are limited ground-based artillery assets.

**Mobility and Survivability.** These considerations apply:

- The division is supported by an organic air assault engineer battalion, often augmented by one or more equipment companies and engineer battalions from the corps engineer brigade.
- Engineers in an air assault division assist mobility by constructing or expanding helicopter LZs, forward arming refuel points (FARP), LAPES, and landing strips and by maintaining, repairing, and rehabilitating existing forward aviation maintenance sights.
- Engineers assist in breaching obstacles and fight as infantry when required.

**Air Defense.** These considerations apply:

- The division is supported by an ADA battalion consisting of SHORAD, such as Avenger and Stinger systems.
- ADA assets provide protection against low-flying aircraft and attack helicopters.
- Early warning will be broadcast over the division early warning net. The air defense battalion will use six early warning radars throughout the division sector.
- Stinger MANPADS sections will be used primarily to support maneuver units. Avengers will be used to protect C2, FAST, and static assets.

**Combat Service Support.** These considerations apply:

- Traditional doctrinal distances and responsibilities do not always apply to air assault operations. The logistical system is tailored to be supported by air, and is therefore dependent on considerable external support.
- A brigade-size TF must rely on an FSB to support its operation.
- The air assault TF is supported by organic assets to push supplies, material, fuel, and ammunition forward by helicopter slingload operations.
- Support of organic aviation units is extensive. FARPs are necessary to maintain the fast pace of air assault operations.

**Command and Control.** These considerations apply:

- Since the battlefield over which the air assault TF operates may extend well beyond normal size, special considerations must be given to the C2 of air assault operations.
- The key to successful air assault operations lies in precise, centralized planning and aggressive, decentralized execution. Successful air assault C2 depends on—
  - Effective task organization. All assets must be tailored into discrete, task organized elements, each with two-way radio communications, unity of command, clearly defined missions and objectives, and provisions for maintaining unit integrity throughout the operation.

- Precise planning. Operations must be planned to occur at a specified time or in a specified sequence (event driven, time driven) despite degraded communications or other adverse conditions.
- Decentralized control. Subordinate commanders should be given the maximum possible freedom of action to ensure mission accomplishment.
- Establishment of air assault radio nets. Radio nets to facilitate ground-to-ground, air-to-air, and ground-to-air communications are established to provide for timely flow of information and redundancy in capability.
- The availability of aviation assets is normally the major factor in determining task organization. Task organization must be determined and announced early in the planning process.
- Unit tactical integrity must be maintained throughout an air assault operation. Squads are normally loaded intact on the same helicopter to ensure unit integrity upon landing.

## **CAPABILITIES**

The capabilities of the air assault division enable it to—

- Conduct deep attacks and raids beyond the FLOT or LC, using helicopters to insert and extract forces.
- React rapidly to tactical opportunities and necessities; conduct exploitation and pursuit operations.
- Rapidly secure and defend key terrain (such as crossing sites, road junctions, and bridges) or deep objectives.
- Conduct operations under adverse weather conditions and at night to facilitate deception and surprise.
- Provide responsive reserves, allowing commanders to commit a larger portion of their forces to action.
- Overfly or bypass barriers and obstacles and strike objectives in otherwise inaccessible areas.
- Rapidly concentrate, disperse, or redeploy to extend the area of influence.
- Rapidly place forces at tactically decisive points in the battle area.
- Delay a much larger force without becoming decisively engaged.
- Conduct fast-paced operations over extended distances.
- Conduct economy-of-force operations over a wide area.
- Provide surveillance or screen over a wide area.
- Attack enemy positions from any direction.
- Bypass enemy positions; achieve surprise.
- Rapidly reinforce committed units.
- React to rear area threats.

## LIMITATIONS

Factors that can limit the effectiveness of the air assault division include—

- Adverse weather, extreme heat and cold, and other environmental conditions such as blowing snow and sand that limit flight operations and helicopter lifting capability.
- Relative lack of NBC protection and decontamination capability.
- Reduced vehicle-mounted antitank weapon systems (except in air assault units).
- Availability of suitable LZ and PZ.
- Enemy aircraft, air defense, and EW action.
- High fuel (JP4) and ammunition consumption rates.
- Battlefield obscuration that limits helicopter flight.
- Reliance on air LOC.
- Reduced ground mobility once inserted.